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ABSTRACT

Literature based reading can be used as a means of introducing and reinforcing geographic concepts. Every story has a setting. The setting is the time and place. Setting is representative of the five fundamental themes of geography. Teachers can integrate geographic skills in order to enhance the student understanding of the text. Geographic understandings also contribute to student appreciation of plot and the author's point of view. Literature and social studies (geography) make good partners. An integrated approach offers benefits to students and makes best use of time. Using geography makes an abstract description of the setting seem more concrete and real for students. Herein are many activities that reinforce reading skills and geographic concepts. Fifteen references and 12 figures are attached. (Author)

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GEOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE: THE LITERACY CONNECTION

ABSTRACT: Literature based reading can be used as a means of introducing and reinforcing geographic concepts. Every story has a setting. The setting is the time and place. Setting is representative of the five fundamental themes of geography. Teachers can integrate geographic skills in order to enhance the student understanding of the text. Geographic understandings also contribute to student appreciation of plot and the author's point of view. Literature and social studies (geography) make good partners. An integrated approach offers benefits to students and makes best use of time. Using geography makes an abstract description of the setting seem more concrete and real for students. Herein are many activities which reinforce reading skills and geographic concepts.

KEY WORDS: literature based reading, five fundamental themes, integrated approach, setting, story map, plot

GEOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE: THE LITERACY CONNECTION presents an integrated approach to infusing geographic education with literature-based readings programs. Every story has a setting. The setting can be expressed in geographic terms. These geographic terms can be used to further student understandings of geography in general. Using geography to extend reading concepts also allows teachers to use concrete examples of real-life places to help students understand the context and plot of the story. Activities using cartographic skills such as encoding and decoding will be discussed. Mapping activities based on real-life situations will help students understand realistic fiction. Students will have opportunities to map using their imaginations by relying on author's descriptions of places in the text.

GEOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE: The Literacy Connection

As adults we take the setting of the story almost for granted. Elementary students, however, need to be introduced to this concept. Integrating geographic skills with literature-based reading is an exciting and meaningful way to do this. As adult readers, we put ourselves in place of characters by the way the author describes the setting of the story. This is necessary for real enjoyment and the feeling of satisfaction that comes from completing an exciting work of fiction. Geography helps children put themselves into the story along with the characters. This can be accomplished by many activities. The activities will be described later in this article. Although the examples I use may be grade specific, the concepts are not. So when I discuss mapping the setting for the "Miss Nelson" trilogy, which is read in the primary grades, the concept of mapping the setting can be used equally well in intermediate or middle school classrooms. The concept is transferable to any kind of literature at any grade level. Since my own teaching is at the primary level, the examples I use are the ones I have developed for use in my own classroom. These activities work wonderfully!

FIVE FUNDAMENTAL THEMES: All activities refer to the five fundamental themes of geography. They also note which reading skills are used in conjuction with particular activities. The teacher accomplishes two outcomes at once: a geography outcome and a reading outcome. Since we are all

pressed to cover ever increasing amounts of material each year, accomplishing 2 skills during one class session becomes necessary and desirable.

I shall explain the five fundamental themes using a adult work of literature and a student work of literature.

LOCATION: In "Gone With the Wind" the author refers to real places which we can locate on maps. Scarlett goes to Five Points in Atlanta. Today, Scarlett would not recognize Five Pints, although it is still there. In student literature, "Make Way for Ducklings" is a good example. We can locate not only Boston, but also find specific places mentioned in the story such as the Charles River and the Public Gardens.

PLACE: In an adult example, the moors of "Wurthering Heights" are vividly described. One can feel both the beauty and the barrenness of the moors. In student literature, "Harry the Dirty Dog". Gene Zion has created a sense of place in which the characters comes alive.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTION: A good adult example would be Hudson's "Green Mansions." The reader can feel the humidity of the rainforest. The children's example would be "The Great Kapok Tree" which, incidentally, is also set in a rainforest and complete with superb illustrations.

MOVEMENT: One good book about travelling around Europe with a Gypsy is "Golden Earrings." It's now out of print, but makes fun reading. A good choice for elementary students is "Mike

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Mulligan and His Steam Shovel." This book also has an environmental strand.

REGION: Pearl Buck's "The Good Earth" is a wonderful book to understand the concept of region in an adult book. She explores every facet of life in China. A child's example, which also comes from China, is Marjorie Flack's "The Story About Ping." It, too, describes much about life in the region of the Yangtse River.

DIORAMAS/POP-UPS: I use these activities with "The Little Red Hen" and the "Winnie the Pooh" cycle of stories. The teacher prepares cut-outs of each character or each character's residence from the text and other places important to the text. The teacher distributes 12x18 construction paper to the students. The teacher models the activity by showing children how to complete the map. For "The Little Red Hen" (see Figure 1) the children draw the hen's home, the wheat field, the road, the mill, the stream, and other places one may see in the country. For the "Winnie the Pooh" cycle (see Figure 2) the children draw the river, the pond, the Hundred Acre Wood, Rabbit's garden, and meadows. The teacher distributes color-cut-and-paste sheets which the children place on their maps according to their understanding of the story. The idea is that the children place the characters and their homes in places where the student thinks they would

The concept of character/setting congruence is reinforced. The children have the opportunity of mapping each's character's location according to where they feel the character should be. The geographic themes of location and region are reinforced. The reading skills of character and setting are reinforced.

POSTCARDS: This activity can be used to reinforce the reading skills of description of setting and main-idea. It reinforces writing of notes and writing addresses (both language arts skills.) It reinforces the geographic themes of location, place, movement, environment, and region. The front of the 6x9 (see Figure 3) card is reserved for the students' art work. The student draws a picture of a significant event from the story. Or the student draws a picture of the setting of the story. On the reverse side the student (see Figure 4) writes the address of the person who will receive the postcard. The other side of the postcard is for a short note to the recipient. Making illustrations based on the text helps children develop skills of imagination and critical thinking.

THE REAL STORY MAP: On a large map of (see Figure 5) the world the teacher locates the setting of the story being read by the group. Or the teacher can locate the place where the

author comes from. The teacher keeps the map up as a permanent bulletin board. At the end of the year, the map is covered with titles and authors from all over the world. This is especially important as school districts begin to move to a multi-cultural reading program.

USING REAL MAPS FOR LITERATURE: Students use 12x18 maps to trace the actual route characters follow during the text. This reinforces the reading skill of sequencing. The geographic themes of location and movement are reinforced. If your maps are washable/erasable this activity is good. You can make your own erasable maps by laminating commercially prepared maps. This activity works with a story such as "The Secret Garden." You can trace the route that Mary took from India to Yorkshire (see Figure 6.)

DRAWING A MAP FROM TEXT PASSAGE: Many authors, especially in novels written for upper elementary grades, give extensive descriptions of the settings. The reader imagines the location of the story. The student will not only draw an illustration of the place from the passage, the student will draw a map of the place described (see Figure 7.) This reinforces the geographic theme of place. This is also a good lesson to introduce or expand upon the attributes of a good map. The "Secret Garden" is an excellent text for this

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activity because the student can draw the garden and also map it after reading the text.

DRAWING A MAP FROM THE TEXT: This activity works well for texts with many illustrations but with little passage description of place. Primary literature such as the "Miss Nelson" trilogy (see Figure 8), the "Frog and Toad" cycle, (see Figure 9), and "Harry the Dirty Dog" (see Figure 10) fall into this category. After reading the story, the children supply information about geographic places mentioned in the story. With their teacher's help, the children make symbols for each place, develop a key, and finally create a map. The maturity of the reader is important here. More mature readers can handle much of this activity independently. Less able readers will need extensive teacher assistance.

The "Miss Nelson" trilogy is instrumental in developing an understanding of the grid system. The grid system is the pattern of streets and roads as they appear in the story. When tracing the route the story's children take through the town, let your "fingers do the walking". The children enjoy seeing how the fingers walk down the street to each place mentioned in the texts. This reinforces the geographic themes of movement, region, and place. The literature outcome of increased sequencing ability is stressed here.

The "Frog and Toad" cycle offers teachers an opportunity to add more and more information to the map. Eventually, after all the stories are read, the map becomes quite extensive. Each of the Frog and Toad stories have a different locale with different descriptions of setting. This reinforces the geographic themes of place, environment, and region. Sometimes maps can overwhelm children because there is too much data on them. In building up this map with the students, the teachers has the opportunity to let the children see how adding data can make maps complicated but not necessarily confusing.

JOURNAL WRITING: Children write and illustrate their own stories. Sometimes, they are asked to reflect upon the literature being discussed in class. By integrating geographical concepts with creative writing, the teacher accomplished two things. Children use and understand geographical concepts and vocabulary in real situations. They also learn the vocabulary better.

Students who learn about mapping from the text can be encouraged to draw maps for the stories they, themselves, create during the writing period. Of course, prior teaching about the attributes of a map and vocabulary for land forms and water bodies is essential. their skills of integrating reading, writing, and social studies (geography)

are important as more and more states move toward competency based testing with an integrated skills approach.

PICTURES FROM MAGAZINES: Many authors write well. Many also have super illustrations. However, the illustrations in the text can be supplemented with photographs from magazines, particularly, "The National Geographic Magazine." The illustrations in "The Story About Ping" are a good example. Although the pictures supplement the text; they do not provide enough detail to serve as teaching pictures to further develop geographic vocabulary and concepts. Fortunately, there have been many magazine selections from the "Geographic" which offer teaching pictures for the teacher. The houseboat illustration in the text can be supplemented by photographs of real houseboats and their inhabitants from magazines. In this way children learn to appreciate the artistry of the illustrator and learn how illustrators develop their own particular style. They also appreciate the differences between photographs as evidence and illustration as interpretation. Interpreting illustrations is also an important reading skill. It is important in primary grades because authors do not often give detailed descriptions of "place" in the text. Good photographs reinforce the theme of place in literature.

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SEQUENCING: In "The Story About Ping", the action takes place on the river. Photocopy pages of significant points from the book. Color and laminate these pictures. One a large map of the setting, children retell and sequence pictures from the text. The story flows down the river, much in the same way the houseboat in the text did (see Figure 11.) The same activity can be accomplished using the story "Ming Lo Moves the Mountain (see Figure 12.)

STORY STARTERS WITH MAGAZINE PICTURES: Again, magazine photographs offer a wealth of detail not often found in the text or illustrations from the text. Children can choose from a variety of pictures and write about them in their journals. Again, this reinforces geography/social studies vocabulary. It also helps the child focus on the main idea of the story and helps the child stick to the point when writing.

MAPPING THE STORY SETTING ON THE CLASSROOM FLOOR: Use contact paper and masking tape to make quick maps of story settings on the floor. These maps will be large enough for students to walk on. In this way, student can walk through the sequence of the story. The students can them copy the framework of the map that the floor provides. They can embellish their map according to their own artistic talent.

USING YOUR LIBRARY The public library has a computer which if you key in the phrase "_____, stories" will display all stories from that region or country. The _____ being filled in with the country you are learning about in social studies. In this way, the teacher will have a wide selection of stories to read during story time. By carefully selecting the one with reading levels comparable to the grade he teachers, the teacher will also have a selection of reading material for directed reading activities. In this way, geography and literature are again integrated.

CREATING COMMEMORATIVE POSTAGE STAMPS: Children dersign their owen stamps based on the settying of the story. This reinfortcers the geographic concept of place. The design should be larger than a postage stamp (3in. X 2 in.) sdo that students can include detail. A hole puncher used around the perimeter creates the perforation holes. The stamps can be affixed to envelopes. The country of origin for the stamp casn be the country of the story's setting.

SUMMARY: Geography is inherent in the setting of the story. Descriptions of the setting or illustrations make the reader more attune to the mood of the story and increase reading enjoyment. Integrating geography and social studies is an interesting and creative method of teaching more during a

busy day. Integrating geography with literature is also a fun way for children to learn geography concepts and appreciate the geography in literature. You might say that such geography instruction is incidental in approach. However, the cumulative effects of such "incidental" instruction have tremendous pay-offs in terms of increased student understandings.

There are many methods of integrating geography and literature. Teaching children how to use these activities makes it possible for the children to apply the skills in other situations with different kinds of literature. Children are on their way to becoming independent learners. Geography skills and concepts learned as part of other area studies become more tangible and meaningful which is why integrated subject teaching is so beneficial to students.

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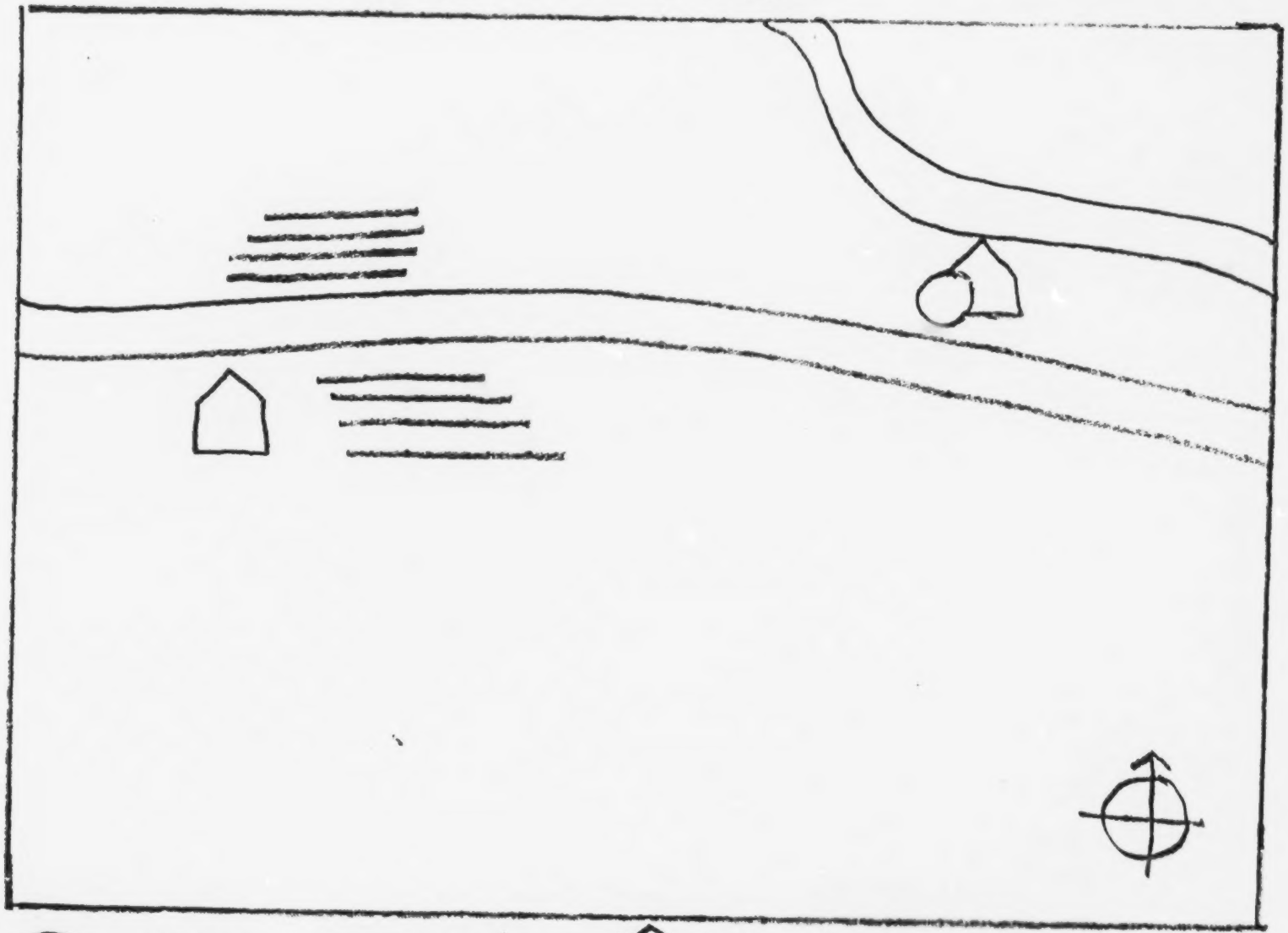
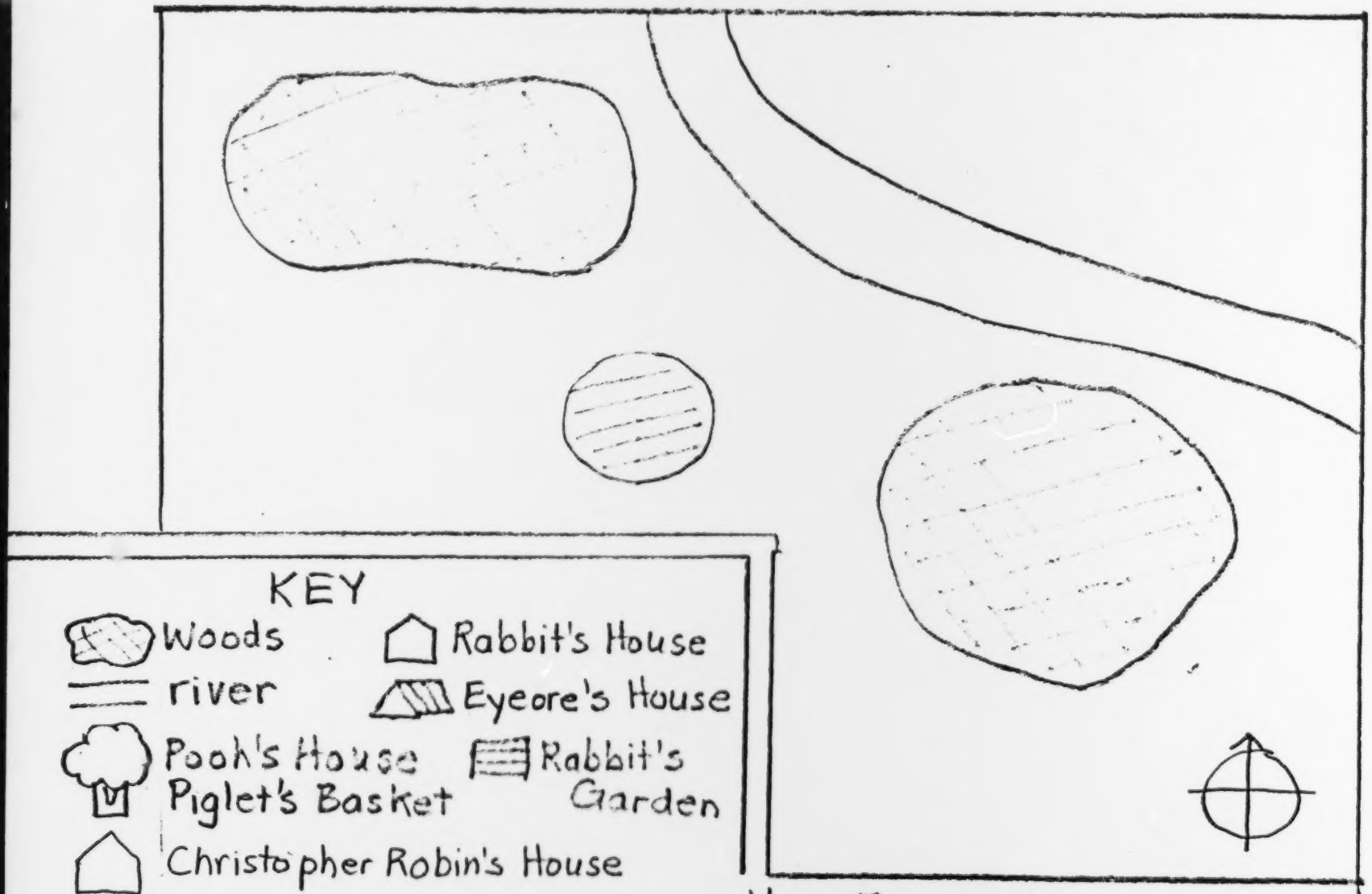
FIGURE: 1 MAP OF THE LITTLE RED HEN'S NEIGHBORHOOD
MR FITZHUGH'S CLASS OCTOBER, 1992.
ACTUAL SIZE: 12" x 18"



17 This map is made for color, cut, & paste pop-up work.
Placement of symbols is a student choice.

FIGURE 2 MAP OF WINNIE THE POOH'S 100 ACRE WOOD
MR. FITZHUGH'S CLASS OCTOBER, 1992
ACTUAL SIZE: 12" X 12"



Note: This map is made for color, cut, & pase pop-up work, Placement of symbols is a student choice.

DEAR JOAN,
THE GARDEN IS
LOVELY. THE APPLE
TREE IS JUST AS
THE BOOK DE
SCRIBED IT!
XXX
BILL

JOAN WATERBURY
RTE 3
MEXICO
NY 13202

FIGURE 3: POSTCARD FRONT
FROM "THE SECRET GARDEN"

FIGURE 4: POSTCARD REVERSE

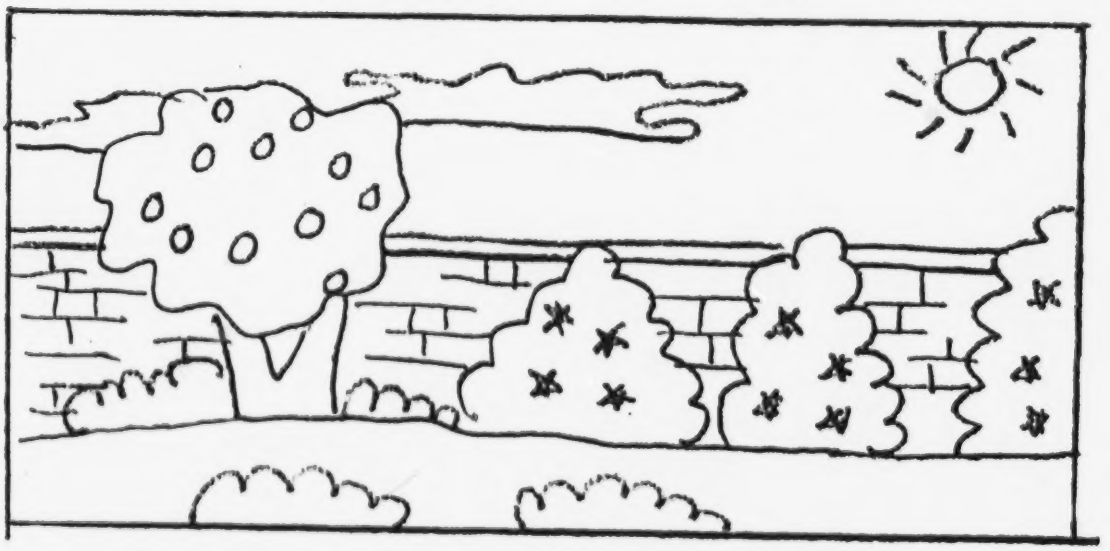


FIGURE 5. STORIES AND AUTHORS FROM AROUND THE WORLD
A YEAR LONG ACTIVITY
JUST A SAMPLE OF TEXTS

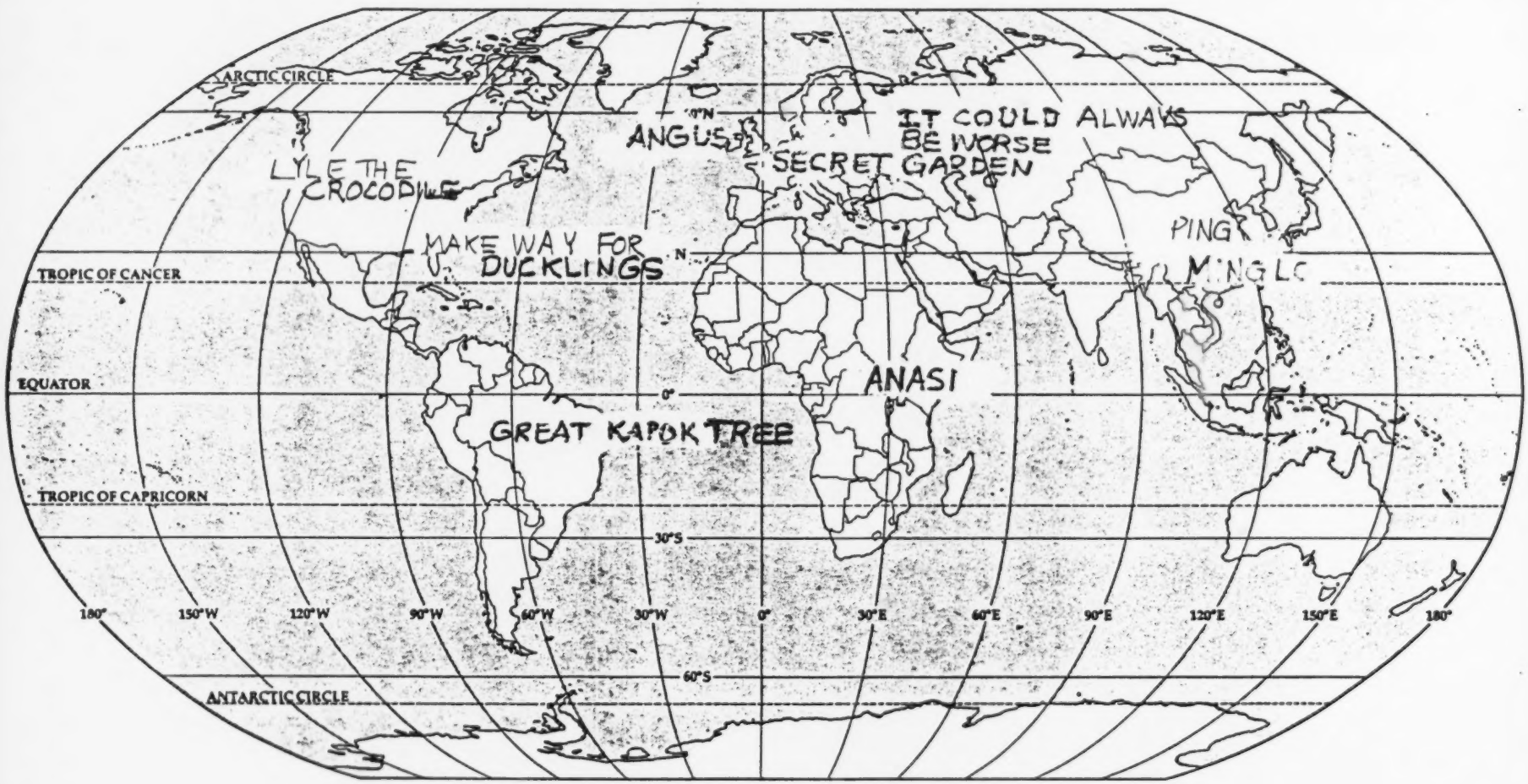


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FIGURE 6: MAP OF MARY'S ROUTE FROM INDIA TO ENGLAND FROM "THE SECRET GARDEN"

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FIGURE 7 MAP OF THE SECRET GARDEN
INDEPENDENT OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

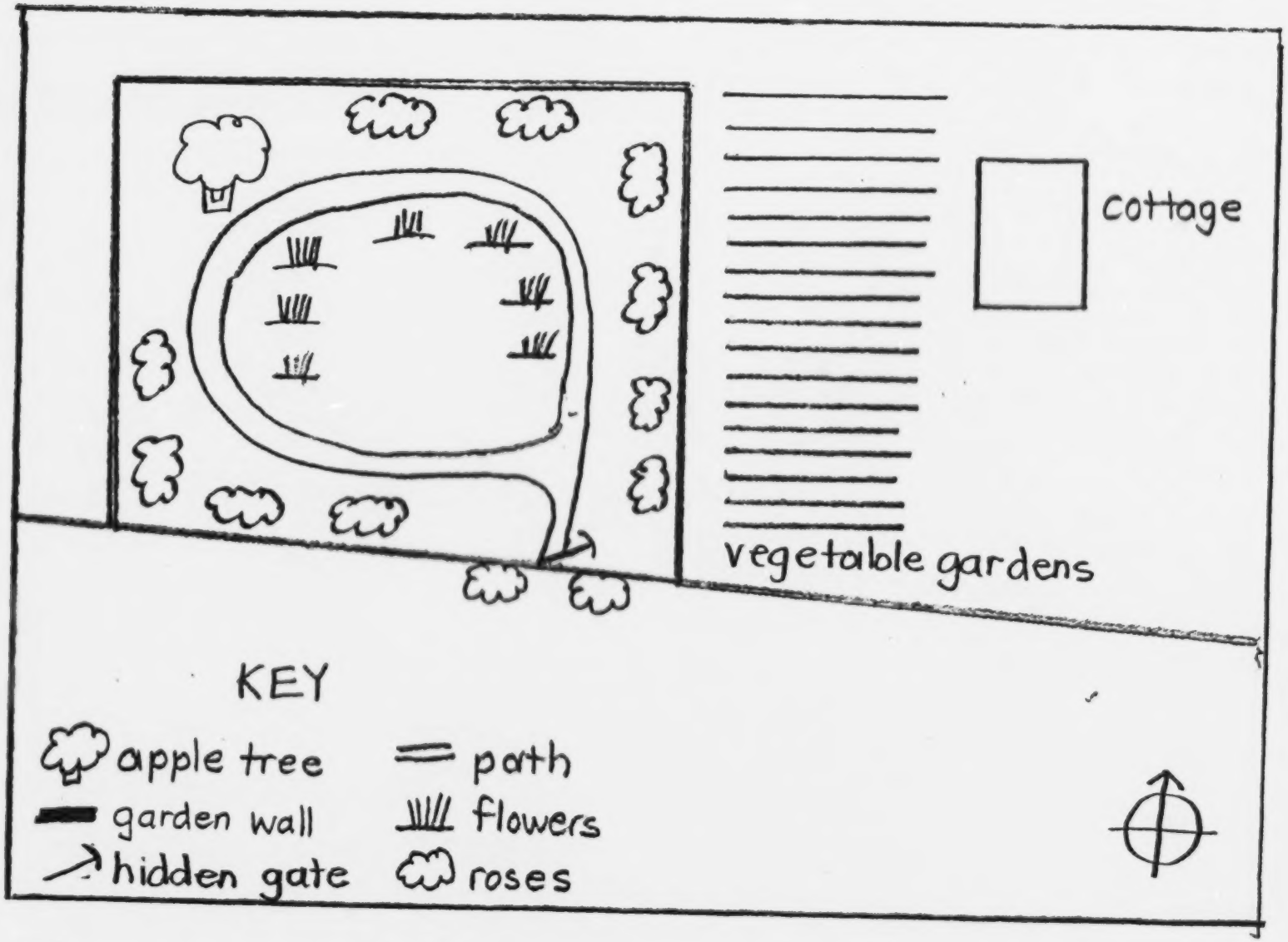


FIGURE 8 MAP OF MISS NELSON'S NEIGHBORHOOD
MR. FITZHUGH'S CLASS MAY, 1992
SIZE: 4' x 6'

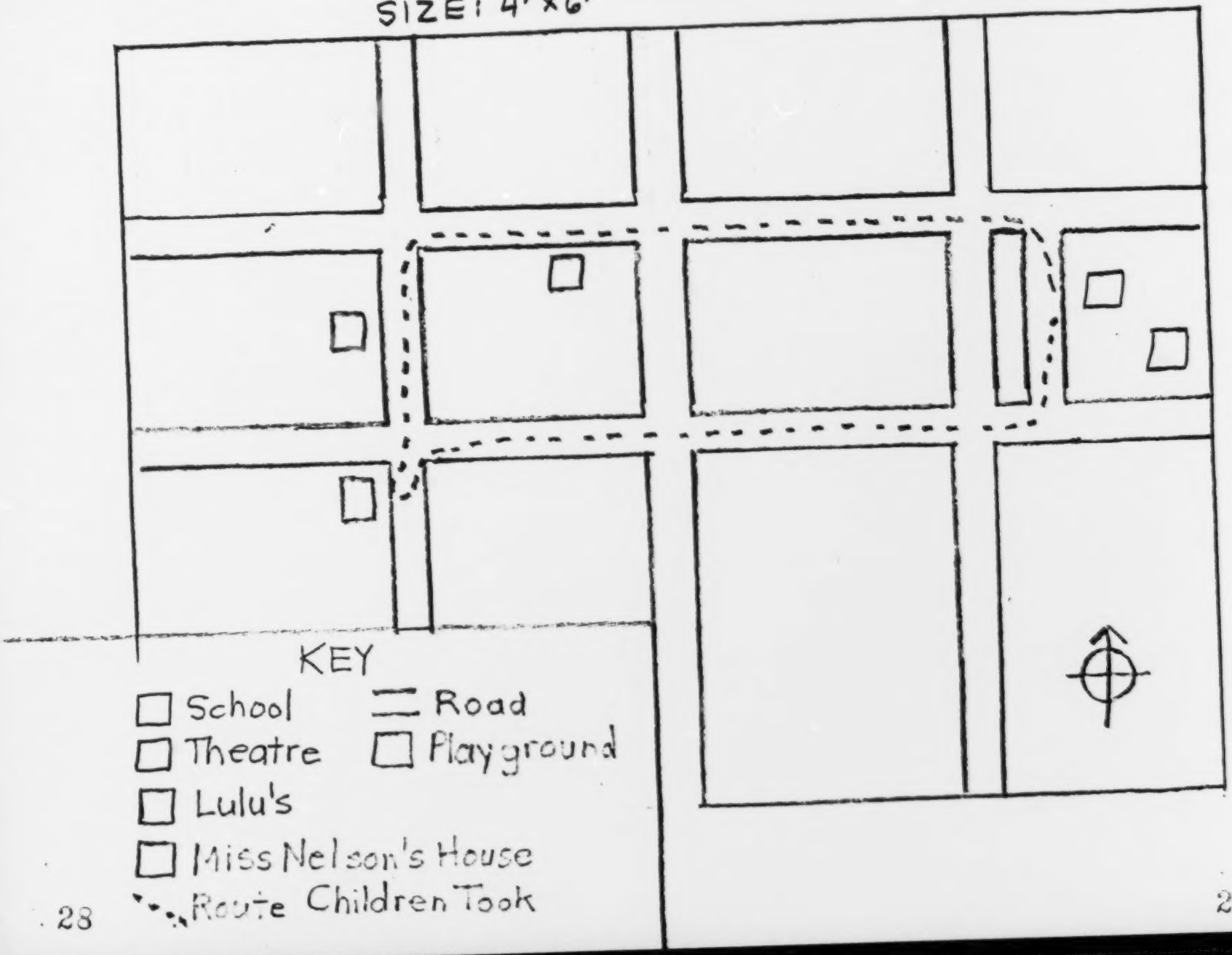
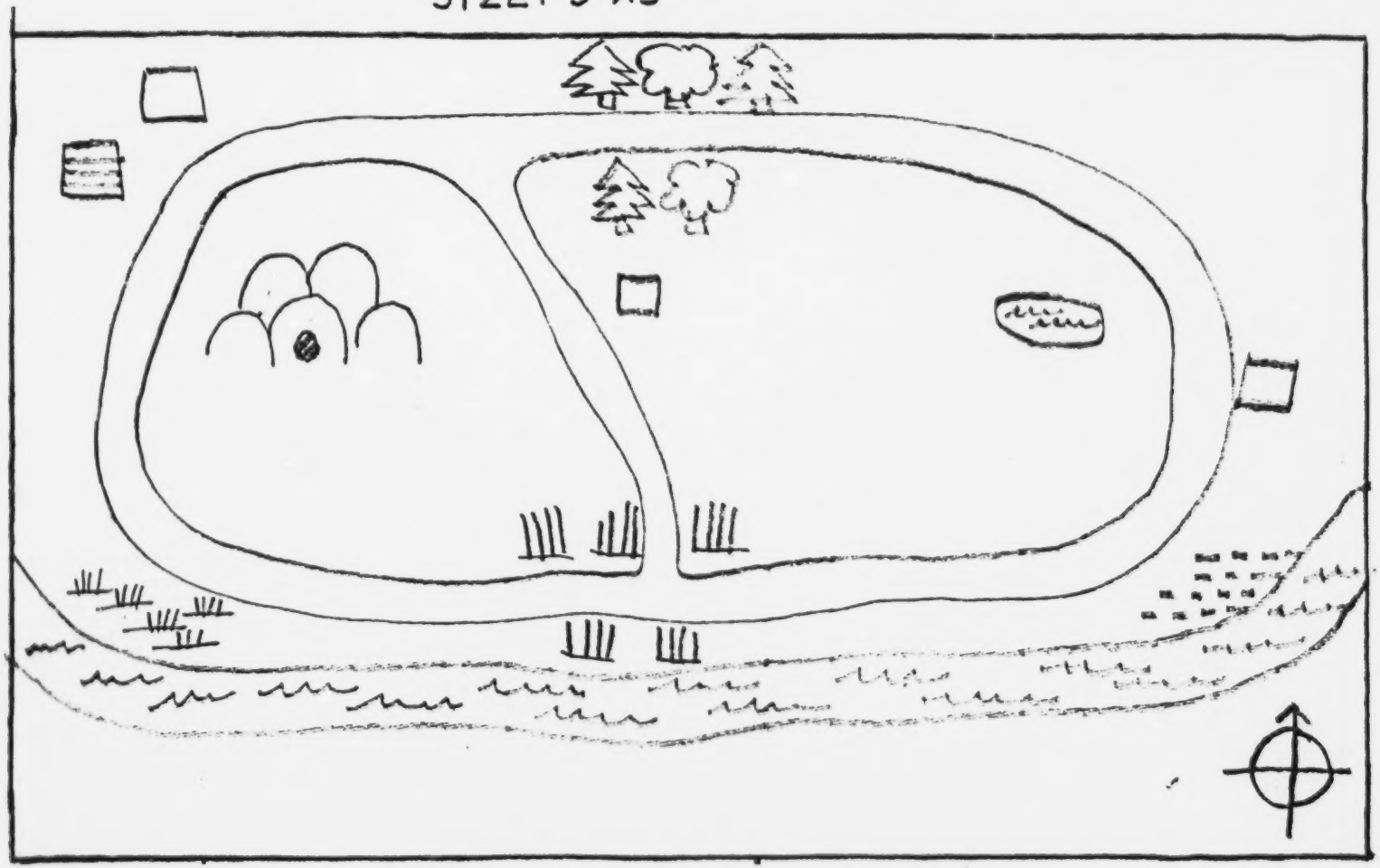


FIGURE 9 FROG AND TOAD LAND MAP
MR. FITZHUGH'S CLASS MARCH, 1972
SIZE: 3'X5'



Frog's House Toad's House Icecream Store garden
swamp mud mountains woods
high grass path river pond

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FIGURE 10

HARRY, THE DIRTY DOG MAP
MR. FITZHUGH'S CLASS
ACTUAL SIZE: 3' x 5'

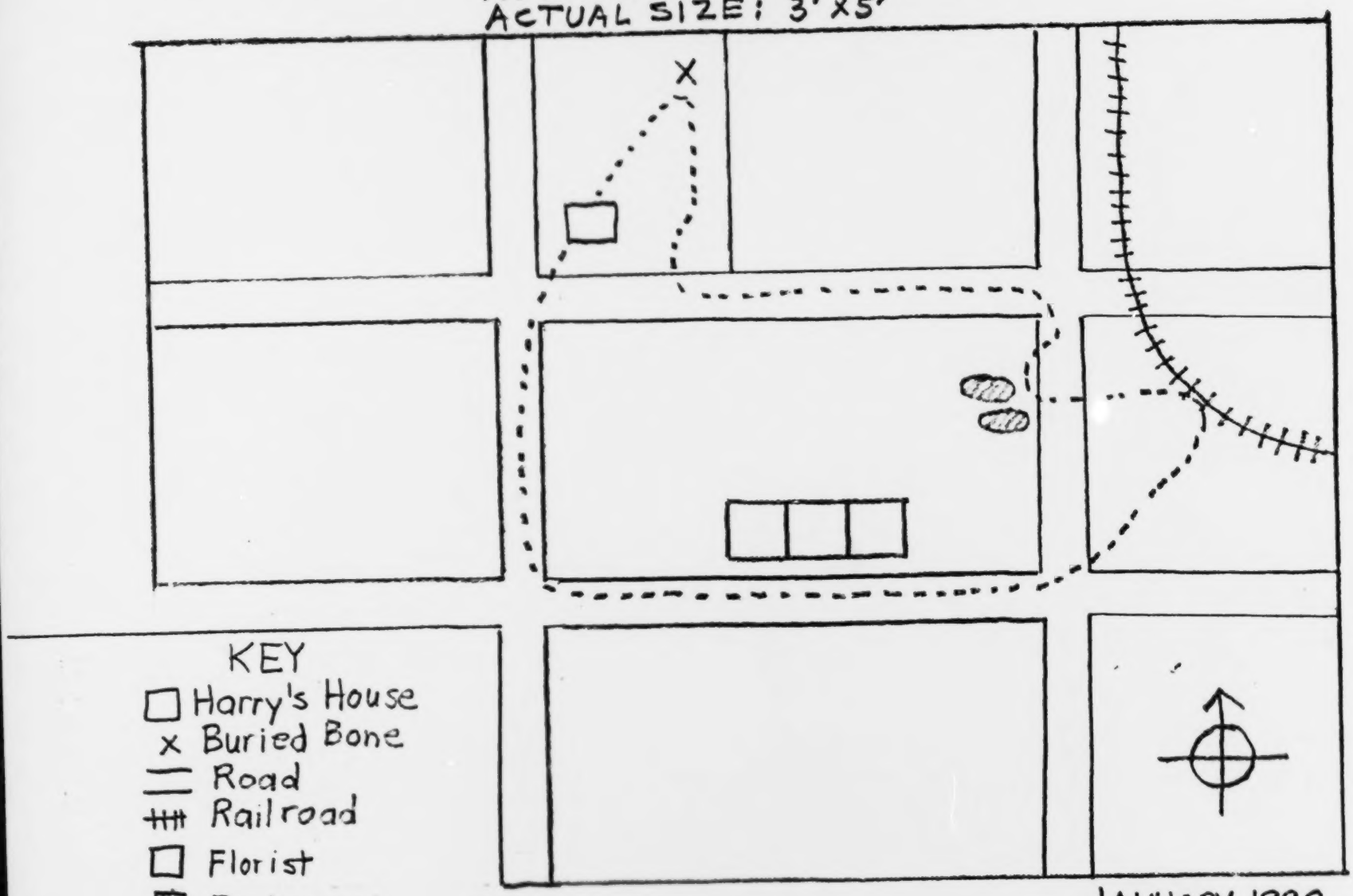
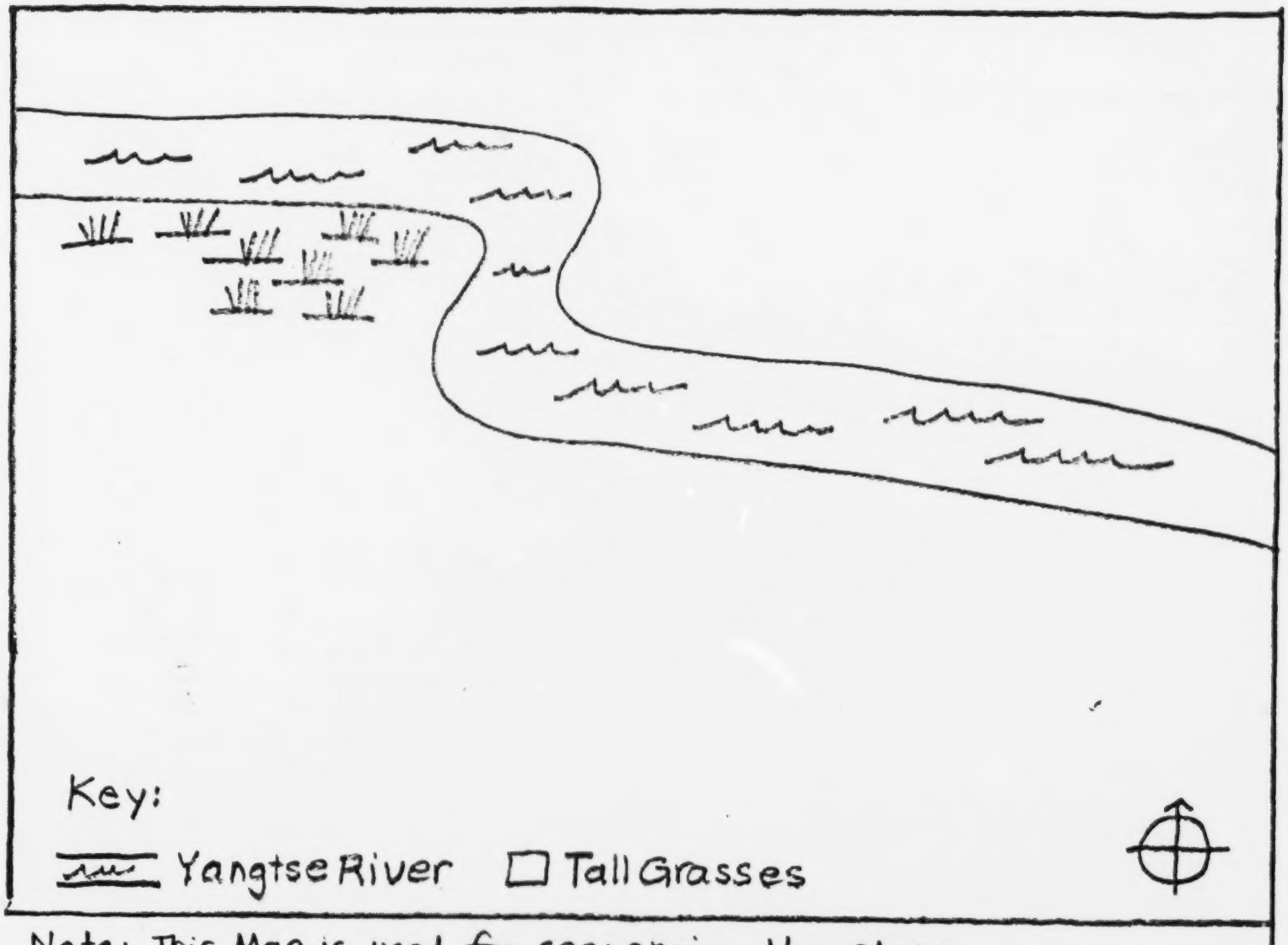
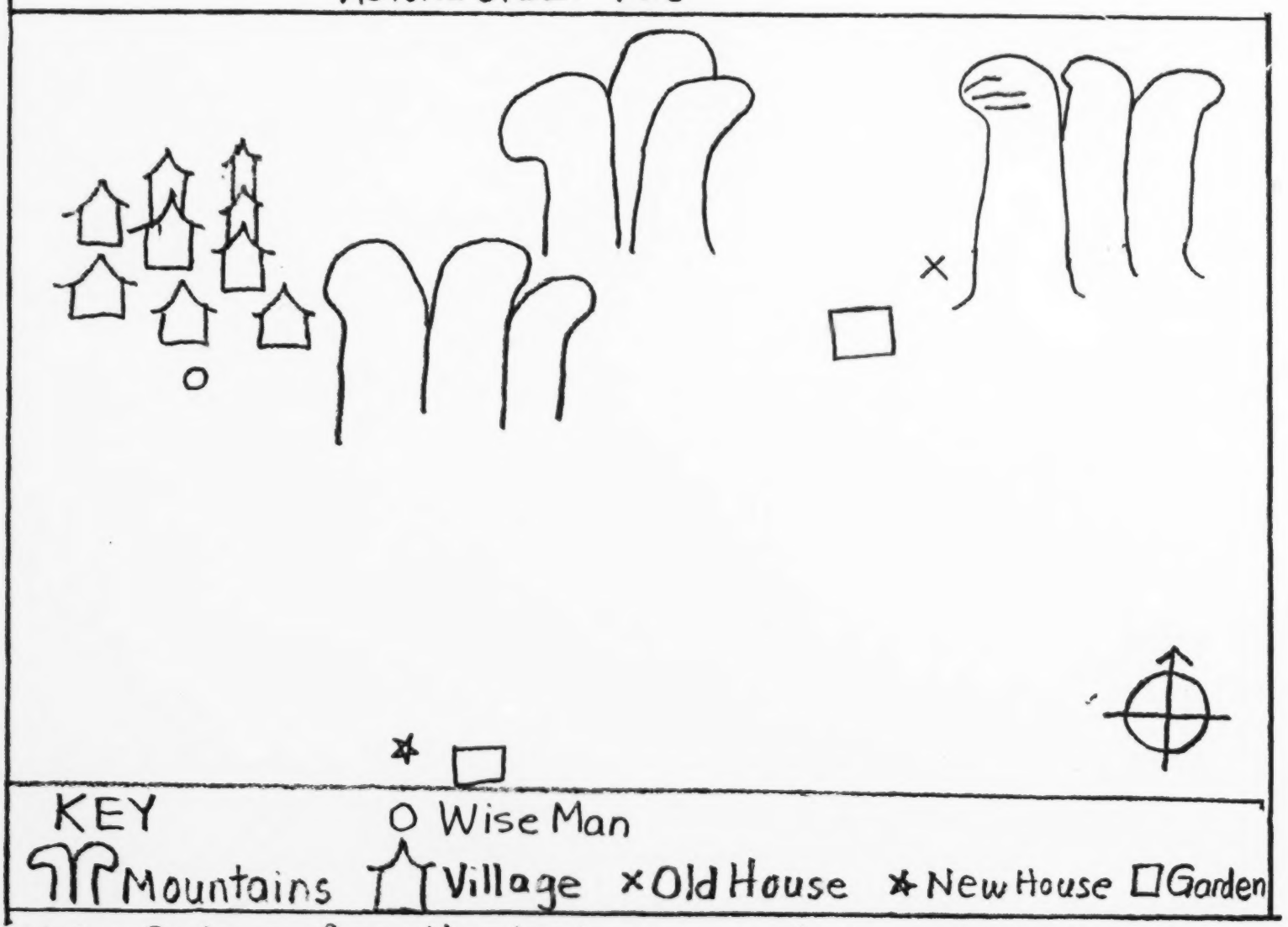


FIGURE 11 MAP OF THE STORY ABOUT PING
MR. FITZHUGH'S CLASS FEBRUARY, 1992
ACTUAL SIZE: 3' x 5'



Note: This Map is used for sequencing the story.

FIGURE 12 MAP FOR MING LO MOVES THE MOUNTAIN
MR. FITZHUGH'S CLASS FEBRUARY, 1972
ACTUAL SIZE: 4'X6'



Note: Pictures from the text are used to retell the story.